

## **HHU Master Plan Committee Minutes: April 28, 2016**

### **Great Hall, Town Hall**

#### **Draft Minutes**

**Present:** Hans Larsen, Ellen Gibbs, Jack Morgan, Matt Kelley, Sharon Gray, David Lussier, Tom Ahern, Seong-Il Ahn, Nancy Calderwood, Ed Cloaninger, Tamara Feldman, Stephan Gauldie, Todd Ofenloch, Lara Pfadt, Allan Port, Sara Shanahan , Jose Soliva, David Stern, Maura Sullivan, Brent Warner, Meghan Jop, Michael Zehner, Joe McDonough

**Also Present:** Tom Harrington, Kelly Weene, Marina Gil

**Hans Larsen opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.**

Per the request of the School Committee and Selectmen, Mr. Larsen noted that until a chair is elected he will facilitate the meetings. The Committee members introduced themselves.

#### **Expected Role of the Chair and Meeting Norms**

Mr. Larsen discussed the investment the Town has made in facilities over the past 10 years including building the new High School, renovating Schofield and Fiske, the Middle School, Sprague and Bates. Hardy, Hunnewell, and Upham are the last 3 schools requiring upgrades. Mr. Larsen discussed logistics for the meetings and noted the staff which is available for questions or assistance including Meghan Jop (Selectmen's Office), Michael Zehner (Planning Director), and Joe McDonough (Facilities Director) but asked that he be kept apprised of requests for additional analysis from the staff.

The Committee's meeting schedule, at present, will be weekly meetings starting at 7:00 pm with a hard stop at 9:30 pm. Each meeting will be taped or broadcast by Wellesley Media. Each meeting will be posted with an agenda, and minutes will be taken and approved by the Committee.

Mr. Ahern asked if there will be a citizen speak at each of the meetings. Mr. Larsen noted there will be a citizen speak, but for this initial meeting, citizen speak will be at the back end of the meeting. Moving forward there will be a citizen speak at every meeting. Mr. Larsen noted as the work plan is established, public forums will be added for various points of discussion.

Mr. Ahern asked if there is a preference on how committee members engage in social media. Mr. Larsen noted the deliberations of this Committee are limited to meetings and members should not be deliberating outside of the posted meetings. Mr. Larsen requested that all communication from the Committee be through him until a chair is elected.

Sharon Gray noted an email address has been set up for citizens to send questions directly to the Committee. [HHU@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:HHU@wellesleyma.gov)

## **Committee Charge**

The Committee discussed the hiring of consultants and the development of additional facility scenarios. Mr. Kelley advocated continuing to use SMMA because of the existing contract and their knowledge of the Wellesley schools. Mr. Larsen explained this Committee will be conducting pre-feasibility studies, and noted it would not be efficient to hire new consultants at this point.

The Committee discussed development of a Master Plan and the steps that would follow the completion of the plan. Mr. Larsen observed it would be ideal to have a unanimous vote in favor of the proposed Master Plan. The next steps would be to seek funding from Town Meeting for a feasibility study. Mr. McDonough explained the elements of a feasibility study. After completion of the feasibility study, the Town would seek funding from Town Meeting for design and construction. Mr. McDonough briefly explained the procurement process.

The Committee discussed how to get a broader understanding of what the community feels is needed. Additional topics for consideration include definition of the term “neighborhood school”, swing space requirements, transportation needs and costs, impacts of any school closure, impact on historic components of schools, sustainability, and overall financial impact.

## **Public Records and Open Meeting Law**

Tom Harrington, Town Counsel - joined the Committee and described in detail the relevant open meeting law, public records law, and ethics law requirements. Mr. Harrington stated any deliberation must occur within a public meeting. He explained that deliberation is any oral or written communication through any medium. It includes email. If there is a quorum of 11 at anytime, deliberation cannot take place unless in a public meeting. Mr. Harrington explained that the State considers email to be a form of deliberation because email is so easily forwarded. He cautioned Committee members to not use email as a vehicle to discuss the business of the Committee. Email is appropriate for the Committee to determine when to meet and the issues to discuss. He suggested Committee members establish a separate email just for this Committee.

Mr. Harrington discussed the applicability of public records laws and Freedom of Information Act Requests (FOIA)

Mr. Harrington discussed the ethics and conflict of interest laws, noting that conflicts of interest primarily relate to financial concerns. If members of the Committee work on school projects for their day jobs, they may be limiting themselves from working on these projects later.

## **Work Plan**

The Committee discussed establishing a measure of success including setting specific goals. The Committee discussed achieving a base level of knowledge on issues before moving

forward and establishing a communication strategy to keep the public informed and engage the community.

### **Citizen Speak**

Kelly Weene, 261 Weston Road, stated she continues to struggle to understand why the focus is not on keeping all the neighborhood schools open. She has attended many meetings and has not heard anything to sway her, but only to convince her more. In the meetings she has attended she has heard talk mostly about traffic and future projections of enrollment. She lives on Weston Road and understands traffic concerns. Having taught in a classroom herself for over 15 years, she recommends the Committee consider using Robert Evans, a clinical and organizational psychologist, who she believes consults for the Wellesley Schools. He has written a book titled *Family Matters: How Schools Can Cope with Crisis in Childbearing*, which discusses how students everywhere are harder to reach and teach. Small schools provide more individualized attention and aid learning.

Marina Gil, Worcester Street, noted that North Carolina has two the top schools in the east with 261 students. In reviewing the private schools around us, none have over 500 students. Ms. Guila noted this is about the children, and stated that Wellesley Middle School is double the size. She wanted to talk about the process including community communication and questioned how the Town can verify that we are doing the very best for the children.

**The Committee adjourned at 9:05**